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Thursday, July 12,
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Housekeepers' Chat

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: Hints on sewing, interior decorating, and canning. Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

--ooOoo--

I went out to Aunt Mary's last night. Aunt Mary is the most cheerful, bustling little person you ever saw, and how she does delight in cooking a company dinner. With Aunt Mary, a company dinner means fried chicken, a big mound of flaky mashed potatoes, with a pool of golden butter in the center, delectable cream gravy -- but why go on? I'm sure you've eaten many a dinner of this kind at your own Aunt Mary's. And doesn't she always say -- as soon as the heaping platter of fried chicken is brought on -- doesn't your Aunt Mary always say: "I declare! I don't know what's the matter with the chicken today -- it isn't as good as usual."

All during the meal, Aunt Mary worries and frets about the fried chicken, which of course is as nearly perfect as any fried chicken could be. When the last piece has disappeared, and we are all wondering where we'll put the black-berry pie, our hostess looks as mournful as a cheerful person can, and says again: "I want you folks to know that I really can fry chicken." We assure Aunt Mary over and over that we never tasted a better meal in our lives, but when she bids us goodbye, "Come back again soon," says Aunt Mary, "and I'll have some real fried chicken for you."

Bless her hospitable heart. She does get so much enjoyment out of apologizing for her delicious food.

Well, I mustn't spend all morning talking about my relatives, even though they are nice people.

The first question today is from a mother who asks whether elastic leg bands and waist bands, in children's bloomers, are harmful. Elastic is always likely to retard circulation. Better play safe, and make leg bands and waist bands of cloth, instead of tight elastic. Cloth bands, or bias bindings, are almost as easily made as the casings for elastic, they are easier to iron, and save the work and cost of replacing worn-out elastic. When you measure the child's leg, for the leg band, take the measurement five inches above the kneecap. The bloomers should be short enough to escape the knee cap, when the knee bends. Another item-- if the bloomers match the dress, don't let more than two inches of bloomer show when the child stands up.

Second question: Do you have any bulletins on making dresses and play suits for children?

Yes indeed, three of them. One's called "Sun Suits for Children," another, "Romper for Children," and the third, "Dresses for the Little Girl." I'll be glad to send all three of them.

Third question: "Do you have any bulletins on interior decorating and remodeling kitchens?"

Answer: There is one excellent bulletin, called "Curtaining the Home," which gives a number of practical ideas about interior decorating. However, this bulletin proved so popular that the free supply was soon exhausted. You can get a copy by sending 10 cents to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. There's another bulletin, called "Convenient Kitchens," which contains plans for making over old kitchens, or for making new kitchens. The kitchen bulletin is free.

Speaking of interior decorating reminds me of a clipping I stuck in my radio notebook the other day. Hope you don't mind my reading to you. Uncle Ebenezer says my worst habit is clipping clippings, and then making him listen to them. I hope I can find one with a good strong moral soon. Know what Uncle Ebenezer did? Wiped his razor blade on one of my brand new bath towels. You can guess what happened to the towel. (Maybe you can guess what happened to Uncle Ebenezer, too.)

The article I have here is about giving the 'teen-age girl a chance to furnish a room of her own.

"A girl's first big lesson in homemaking comes when she is allowed to carry out her own ideas of furnishing and decoration, in a room of her own. Before this time, she has had small chance to express herself along these lines, save for the tiny beginning that she made playing house when considerably younger. If Betty or Jean is given free rein in developing her room, only being asked to work slowly enough so that she is sure she will be satisfied in the end, with what she is sure she will be satisfied in the end, with what she is doing, the experience will be one of the most valuable of her early life, especially if she is kept to a definite, reasonable expenditure.

If the room is to be completely done over, it is a good plan to set aside a sum when the decision is first made, so that all of the necessary items may be listed and provided for without additional expense, or having to do without a part of them. . . . If Betty knows just how much she is to have to spend in doing her room, she can plan accordingly. She may decide to use the ceiling paper for the walls, instead of the expensive sort that she first considered. It will make a lovely, soft background for her pictures and painted furniture. With the difference, added to what she will save by using the old armchair from the attic, dressed up in a gay new chintz slip cover, she will have enough to buy a rug."

I won't read any more of the article, but I must tell you how one of the 'teen-age girls furnished her room. The curtains are soft, ruffled marquisette, draped back on either side of the many-paned windows. The side drapes are of colorful chintz, extending from the ceiling to the floor. The curtain poles are the old-fashioned wooden ones, which are coming in again.

The paper in this room is rose, with a tiny, all-over design in blue. It is an old-fashioned design, much like the calico our grandmothers used to make sunbonnets of. The furnishings in the room include hooked rugs, a plain little old-fashioned wooden chair, a simple bed and chest of drawers, a little wall shelf for books, and an old-fashioned clock. The room is a pretty one, that any girl would be proud to own.

Next question: "Please tell me how to can sweet corn."

The answer is too long to broadcast; I sent you a copy of the canning bulletin yesterday. By the way, did you ever stop to think why fresh, home grown sweet corn tastes so good? The reason is that about half the sugar is lost from corn during the first 24 hours after the ears are pulled. Most of the sugar which is lost changes to starch, so the food value is not affected much. Most vegetables lose water rapidly after they are picked, and many of them get tough, and stringy. That's why quick work is necessary, from the garden to the can, during the canning season. Sweet corn, string beans, tomatoes, in fact, most vegetables will keep better when canned within an hour or two after they are gathered from the garden, than if allowed to lie over night. Send for the canning bulletin, if you want advice on canning vegetables and fruits.

Next question: "Dear Aunt Sammy: Please do not read my name, if you read this letter aloud. This spring we moved into an old house, and I was horrified yesterday to find a bedbug in the bedroom. Please send directions immediately for ridding the house of these disgraceful pests."

Answer: The directions are on the way, in the bulletin called "Bedbugs and Their Control." The bulletin will come to you in a plain wrapper, and I shall never breathe your name to a soul. In fact, I always preserve the utmost secrecy as to the names of persons who ask for this important bulletin. "Bedbugs and Their Control," that's the name, and you'd be surprised how many copies of this bulletin I send out.

Now let's see what the Menu Specialist has suggested for a hot day in July. Something cool, I hope. I don't want any hot soup or baked potatoes today. Everybody have a pencil? Then let's start: Cold Sliced Leg of Lamb, with a Cool Green Mint Gelatin. What do you know about that! The Menu Specialist has been reading the new Lamb bulletin. I know, because there's a picture, in the Lamb bulletin, of this very dish, and it looks perfectly delicious. Well, ladies and gentlemen, let's go on with the menu: Cold Sliced Leg of Lamb with Mint Gelatin, as I said before; Peas; Potato Chips or Shoestring Potatoes; Cheese Biscuits; and Blackberry Ice with Vanilla Wafers. I can't pick a flaw in that, for a midsummer luncheon or supper. It's good enough for company.

I won't take your time to broadcast directions for cooking the lamb. I'd rather send you the new free leaflet, called "Lamb As You Like It." But the recipe for this nice gelatin is not in the bulletin, so I'll give you the recipe. Eleven ingredients, for Mint Gelatin:

2 tablespoons gelatin	2 tablespoons pineapple juice
1/2 cup cold water	1/2 cup diced cucumber
5 tablespoons sugar	4 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt	5 drops oil of peppermint, and
1-1/2 cups boiling water	Green coloring matter
1/2 cup crushed pineapple, drained	

Eleven ingredients, let's repeat them: (Repeat)

Soak the gelatin in the cold water until it's soft. Add the gelatin to the boiling water, with the sugar and salt, and stir until all are dissolved. Cool, then add the crushed pineapple, the diced cucumber, pineapple and lemon juice, oil of peppermint, and enough coloring matter to make the mixture a pale green. Set the container in ice water, and stir until the gelatin mixture begins to set. Rinse a mold with cold water, coat it lightly, with some of the clear gelatin, and place thin slices of cucumber in the bottom and sides. Then fill the mold with the rest of the gelatin mixture, and let stand in a cold place until firm. The meat dish is most attractive, if the slices of cold lamb are placed around the edge of the dish, and the mold of green gelatin in the center. Serve mayonnaise dressing with the mint gelatin.

One more recipe for you today, and that the recipe for Fresh Fruit Ice. Only five ingredients, for Fresh Fruit Ice:

2-1/2 cups fruit juice	1 cup sugar
3/4 cup water	1/8 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons lemon juice, strained	

Five ingredients again please: (Repeat)

Just a minute, and I'll tell you how to prepare this Fresh Fruit Ice. In making this ice, you may use blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, cherries, and any other juicy fruit. Strawberries or red raspberries make an ice of the most attractive red color.

Already now, for the directions: Crush the fruit, and heat it for about two minutes, meanwhile stirring and pressing, so that the juice runs freely. Strain through a thick layer of cheesecloth, and to the juice add the sugar, water, lemon juice, and salt. Stir until the sugar is dissolved and pour into a freezer. Use a freezing mixture of 1 part salt to 4 or 6 of ice. Turn the crank of the freezer slowly. After freezing, remove the dasher, pack the freezer with more ice and salt, and let the fruit ice stand for an hour or more to ripen. This will make about 1 quart.

To repeat the menu: Cold Sliced Leg of Lamb with Mint Gelatin; Peas; Potato Chips or Shoestring Potatoes; Cheese Biscuits; and Blackberry Ice with Vanilla Wafers.

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